



Capacity development, and innovation systems and platforms

Iddo Dror

Multi-stakeholder or innovation platforms are increasingly seen as a promising vehicle for agricultural innovation and development. In the field of agricultural research for development (AR4D), such platforms are an important element of a commitment to more intentional, structured and long-term engagement among sector stakeholders.

The International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) has been increasingly involved in innovation platforms in recent years, through its role as a core program partner of the CGIAR Research Program on Integrated Systems for the Humid Tropics and directly through several projects like the Africa RISING (Africa Research in Sustainable Intensification for the Next Generation) program in Ethiopia.

Building on the work of the Nile Basin Development Challenge, the Africa RISING program has established strategic innovation platforms at the district (woreda) level, operational innovation platforms at the neighbourhood (kebele) level and farmer-based innovation clusters throughout Ethiopia. AR4D platforms are also being established in Tanzania and Mali, in collaboration with the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) and other partners.

ILRI helped coordinate platforms as part of a MilkIT project, which has increased milk production and provided employment for women in rural India and Tanzania. Innovation platforms were also central to a smallholder goat project (imGoats) in India and Mozambique.

In addition to piloting innovation platforms in field projects and the sharing lessons learned to operationalize the concept of innovation platforms, the ILRI Policy, Trade and Value Chains research program has partnered with the ILRI Capacity Development Unit to host six graduate fellows. Using a mix of quantitative and qualitative research methods, these fellows have developed, field-tested, adapted and validated a model to monitor and evaluate innovation platforms. Developed in 2013 and first tested on the Volta2 project innovation platforms in Ghana and Burkina Faso, in 2014 further testing was undertaken on MilkIT platforms in India and Tanzania and piloted again in the Tanzania Dairy Development Forum and the Nicaragua Learning Alliance.

As part of its work for CGIAR Humidtropics and Challenge Program on Water and Food in 2013, ILRI published 12 Innovation platform practice briefs to help guide agricultural research practitioners. The topics of these briefs range from the fundamentals of 'Developing innovation capacity through innovation platforms' through to 'Power dynamics and representation in innovation platforms' and 'Monitoring innovation platforms'. Providing a rich array of case studies, the practice briefs have subsequently been translated into Hindi, Mandarin, Vietnamese and Thai to facilitate their use by local practitioners.

In the same year, Wageningen University and Research Centre (WUR) and ILRI published a Humidtropics paper reviewing critical issues for reflection in designing and implementing research for development in innovation platforms.

In May 2014, ILRI, WUR and IITA held a Humidtropics workshop on Understanding, Facilitating and Monitoring Agricultural Innovation Processes. The four-day workshop helped participants gain an understanding of complex agricultural problems and how the establishment of stakeholder partnerships can offer innovative solutions. Practical issues relevant to innovation platforms were considered and opportunities were provided to share and learn from others.

Later in 2014 and 2015, drawing on the instructional design services of the ILRI Capacity Development Unit and the knowledge and experience of subject matter experts (SMEs) from ILRI, IITA, ICRAF and Wageningen University, 13 online blended-approach modules were created. This modules also included face-to-face workshops to sequence content and learning experiences designed to help learners rapidly acquire and retain the skills and knowledge needed to facilitate innovation platforms.

The course design is based on a constructivist approach which recognises that learning occurs as the result of interaction with content and other learners. The self-paced online learning modules include frequent quiz questions, to provide feedback to learners on their progress, and a rich variety of interactive learning assignments. Related workshop modules are based on highly interactive group exercises that challenge learners to apply the skills and knowledge gained through the online program.

The Humidtropics Innovation Platform Case Study Competition continued the quest to decipher the DNA of innovation platforms. It brought together many stakeholders and actors in the agricultural sectors of developing countries to produce case studies featuring the most innovative ideas, best practices, actionable knowledge,

Iddo Dror works for the International Livestock Research Institute.

Capacity development is a prominent feature of ILRI's strategy. This refers to the intentional and purpose-driven efforts to increase stakeholder capacity to undertake and use research to generate development outcomes and scale up in a sustainable manner. ILRI Capacity Development Briefs highlight the depth and breadth of these ILRI and partner activities, and are circulated to contribute to improved practices and better lives through livestock. The briefs are purposively kept short and provide 'snapshots' of the topics they cover.

and successful strategies emerging from mature innovation platforms in the research landscape on agricultural systems. The themes investigated in the case study competition included how innovation platforms have:

- Facilitated agricultural systems trade-offs to help farmers maximize production and yield;
- Optimized simultaneous work on multiple commodities;
- Scaled-up beneficial agricultural interventions; and
- Identified challenges and dynamics leading to platform failures.

Shortlisted cases were invited to a four-day 'writeshop' at ILRI's Nairobi headquarters in February 2015, where they benefited from mentoring on writing case studies and 'pitching' their cases. This work culminated in a book entitled *Innovation Platforms for Agricultural Development—Evaluating the mature innovation platforms landscape*, published by Routledge (Taylor & Francis Group).

The examples reported in the book will help the many actors involved with agricultural innovation platforms worldwide reflect on their actions and achievements (or failures), and find tools to share their experiences. Chapters feature case studies from Central Africa, Ethiopia, India, Kenya, Nicaragua and Uganda. The authors reflect critically on the impact of innovation platforms and showcase their progress, providing an important sourcebook and inspiration for students, researchers and professionals.

For more information

- A look at multi-stakeholder or innovation platforms: From Africa RISING to MilkIT to imGoats to Humidtropics
- ILRI reports on innovation platforms.

Photo credit:

Page 1: ILRI/Beniyam Seyoum and Tewodros Girma

Contact

Iddo Dror
Head of capacity development
ILRI, Kenya
i.dror@cgiar.org
<https://ilri.org/capacitydevelopment>



ilri.org
better lives through livestock
ILRI is a member of the CGIAR Consortium

Box 30709, Nairobi 00100, Kenya
Phone: +254 20 422 3000
Fax: +254 20 422 3001
Email: ILRI-Kenya@cgiar.org

Box 5689, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Phone: +251 11 617 2000
Fax: +251 11 617 2001
Email: ILRI-Ethiopia@cgiar.org



The research brief has a Creative Commons licence. You are free to re-use or distribute this work, provided credit is given to ILRI.

December 2015